

# NEWSLETTER of the Wisconsin Entomological Society

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Volume 15, Number 3

Les Ferge, Editor

October 1988

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## ANNUAL MEETING TO BE HELD NOVEMBER 5 IN MADISON

The Wisconsin Entomological Society Annual Meeting will begin at 1:30 PM, Saturday, November 5, in room 150 Russell Labs, on the University of Wisconsin Madison campus. Russell Labs is located at the corner of Babcock and Linden Drives. Since the U.W. football game is out-of-town that day, sufficient parking should be available in the lot behind Russell Labs (entered from Observatory Drive).

The main part of the program will consist of our annual photo salon, plus a couple of short presentations. More details regarding the program appear in Phil's column (President's Notes).

## 1989 DUES NOTICE

Enclosed in this Newsletter is your dues envelope for 1989. Please note that dues are to be sent directly to the Treasurer: Bob Borth, 6926 N. Belmont La., Fox Point, WI 53217. Your prompt payment will be greatly appreciated, in order that Bob may wind up the dues collection before his busy tax preparation season begins.

## PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Phil Pellitteri

I regret that I was out-of-state and missed the September collecting trip at Cedarburg Bog. Les passed on that there were a lot of "good things" on the wing.

Our next meeting promises to be a very busy afternoon. It is time for our 5th Annual Photo Salon. All members are encouraged to submit up to five slides for consideration. The winner's name will be added to the William E. Sieker Memorial Photo Salon plaque. Winning photos from previous years will also be on display.

We will also be having two short presentations. Rose Kachadoorian will be sharing some of the Lepidopteran and other interesting flora and fauna she has found in her work in Wisconsin cranberry bogs. I will also speak on some insects of current interest.

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The Newsletter of the Wisconsin Entomological Society is published three times a year, at irregular intervals. It is provided to encourage and facilitate the exchange of information by the membership, and to keep the members informed of the activities of the organization. Members are strongly encouraged to contribute items for inclusion in the Newsletter. Please send all news items, notes, new or interesting insect records, season summaries, research requests etc. to the editor: Les Ferge, 7119 Hubbard Avenue, Middleton, WI 53562.

If anyone else would like to be on the program, we can easily fit you in. Just contact me prior to the meeting. This would also be a good time to bring in some of the "trophy" catches or that new book you have found. As usual, there will be time to sit and chat. We are planning to have dinner at a local restaurant following the meeting.

It is also time to elect officers for 1989. If anyone has an interest in serving, or a friend that has, we would be glad to receive any nominations. I am willing to run again, but would be more than happy to step aside if anyone has an interest in the President's position. I'm sorry, but I decline to get involved in a national debate of issues on television!

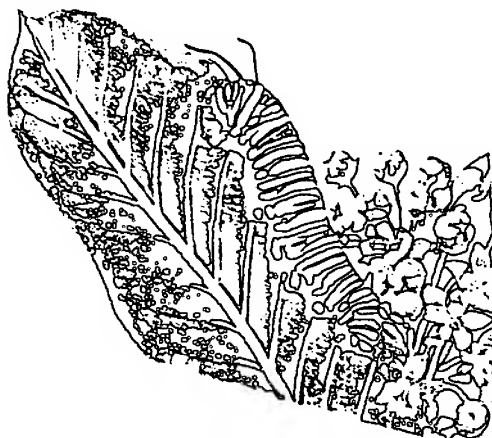
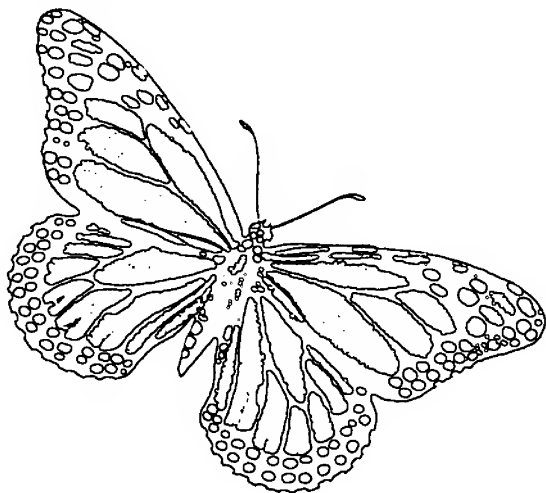
#### LEPIDOPTERA SEASON SUMMARY CONTRIBUTIONS WANTED

1988 Wisconsin Lepidoptera records are wanted for inclusion in the season summary which is to appear in the February W. E. S. Newsletter. Data received may also be included in the Lepidopterists' Society Season Summary. Things to report include rare or unusual species occurring in your area, migrants, unusually early/late occurrences, rearing/larval host data, flowers visited by adults, and so on. Please indicate locality by county and date of capture or observation, and note if specimens were collected, photographed or observed. The Wisconsin butterfly checklist that appeared in the last Newsletter (May 1988) may be used as a guide to scientific names and listing order for submitted reports. For moths, use the latest reference available to you. Specimens whose identities need to be verified may be brought to the November meeting, or arrangements to have them looked over may be made individually. Please send reports before 5 January to: Les Ferge, 7119 Hubbard Ave., Middleton, WI 53562.

#### LINCOLN BROWER TO LECTURE AT MILWAUKEE PUBLIC MUSEUM

(from Allen Young)

A lecture entitled "Tropical Conservation in Relation to the Migratory Habits of the Monarch Butterfly" will be presented by Dr. Lincoln P. Brower, Department of Zoology, University of Florida, Gainesville. It will take place on Tuesday, November 15, 1988, at 7:30 PM in the Lecture Hall of the Milwaukee Public Museum, 800 W. Wells Street. This is a free public lecture commemorating the opening of the museum's new exhibit hall: "Rain Forest: Exploring Life on Earth." The Museum will open at 7:00 PM for the lecture, with a reception to follow lecture. RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED: Call (414) 278-2734 by November 8.



## CONFERENCE FOCUSES ON CONSERVATION OF PRAIRIE INSECTS

A conference entitled Special Concerns in Prairie Management: Butterflies and Other Invertebrates took place at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls on August 27, 1988. Well over 100 people attended, indicating that an unexpected amount of interest and concern for prairie invertebrates exists. Wisconsinites in attendance included staff members of the DNR's Bureau of Endangered Resources, The Nature Conservancy Wisconsin Chapter, and your editor.

In the keynote address "Effects of Fire Management on Dakota and Ottoe Skippers," Robert Dana provided a summary of prairie ecology concepts which need to be considered in formulating prairie management and restoration plans. Fire was a very important part of the prairie ecosystem in presettlement times, maintaining the openness and integrity of these once vast areas. However, these areas were not burned all at once, but randomly, creating a "mosaic" of conditions. The small, isolated prairie remnants of today often lack this "mosaic" and if burned in their entirety, risk losing their only reservoir of prairie-restricted but fire-sensitive invertebrates, which ordinarily recolonize burned areas quickly.

Dana's experimental work has demonstrated that the prairie-restricted Dakota and Ottoe Skippers, which overwinter as partially-grown larvae in shelters, are able to survive prairie fires. However, their mortality is increased by a high fuel load (accumulation of excessive dry grass) and by fires occurring too late in spring.

Management guidelines were suggested, stressing a policy of non-uniformity. Controlled burns of entire sites should be avoided. A rotating schedule of burning defined sections of a site was advocated, in which substantial areas of each habitat type are left unburned in a given season. In this way, the beneficial effects of fire on the plant life are obtained without catastrophic loss of associated insect life.

An "information vacuum" exists regarding the invertebrate components of the prairie community. Among the most urgent needs are basic inventories of species and monitoring of populations.

Abstracts of some of the papers presented (as provided to conference participants) appear below:

Braker, Nancy, Land Steward, The Nature Conservancy, Madison, WI. Management of Nicrophorus americanus, a Globally Endangered Insect, on Block Island, Rhode Island.

The American burying beetle, Nicrophorus americanus, is known only from Block Island, Rhode Island. Little is known of the original habitat of this animal or its ecological requirements. Management schemes of a coastal grassland for this species are discussed.

Cruden, Robert, Dept. of Botany, University of Iowa. Potential for Local Extinction of Prairie Invertebrates.

The life histories of various weevils (Curculionidae and Bruchidae) and their hymenopterous parasitoids are liable to local extinction if the host plants of the weevils are destroyed during the egg or larval stage of either insect. These insects presumably live for one year and the critical periods in their life histories are the short time they spend on the plant. The rest of the year is probably spent in the duff or in the soil. Destruction of the host plants just prior to flowering might also result in a drastic reduction or extinction of local populations. Recolonization of a host population by the weevils is a likely event if there is a nearby population.

Figg, Dennis E. and Calvert, Paul D., Natural History Section, Missouri Department of Conservation, Jefferson City, MO. Life History and Present Distribution of the Prairie Mole Cricket, Gryllotalpa major Saussure.

The prairie mole cricket is a subterranean Orthopteran specially adapted to the southwest region of the tallgrass prairie. Records of historic occurrence originate from Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Arkansas, Illinois and Mississippi. Present distribution, determined by a survey conducted in 1986 and 1987, is significantly smaller than the historic range. Extant populations persist in small, isolated fragments of tallgrass prairie. They are conspicuously absent from the Flint Hills, despite this being the largest tallgrass prairie remaining today. Dry-mesic prairies with a long history of

prairie hay management are the most likely places to find remaining prairie mole cricket populations. These populations are vulnerable because of the continued loss of habitat, land use detrimental to the species, and features in their own life history that make them less likely to persist in today's fragmented prairie habitat.

Orwig, T. T. Rare Butterflies on Two Loess Hills Prairies in Iowa.

Recent collecting on several Loess Hills prairies in Western Iowa has shown them to be ideal butterfly habitats. For example, Sioux City Prairie, a 150 acre site within Sioux City, Preserves at least 54 species of butterflies. A number of these species are restricted to prairie, and ten species are relatively rare in Iowa: Erynnis baptisiae, E. martialis, E. horatius, Hesperia ottoe, H. pawnee, Atrytone arogos iowa, Atrytonopsis hianna, Amblyscirtes vialis, Euchloe olympia and Lycaeides melissa. But Loess Hills prairies present special challenges to managers, and demand management strategies that augment or periodically replace burning, including spot spraying, mowing and girdling. Diversity in management strategies benefits both the animal and plant communities, and helps preserve a greater prairie ecosystem.

Schennum, Wayne, MacHenry County Conservation District. Life History Features of Wetland Butterflies; Relationship to Wetland Community Management.

Several butterflies of open-structured Midwestern wetlands may be extremely vulnerable to habitat degradation or to otherwise beneficial vegetation management practices such as fire. Such species tend to be non-vagile; restricted to particular plant communities such as tussock sedge meadows or sedge marshes; and apparently colonial within broad areas of suitable habitat. Four management problems faced by these species and potential solutions to these problems are as follows: 1) habitat reduction by brush expansion in sedge meadows -- physical brush removal, burning, water table protection; 2) direct destruction by complete litter burns -- partial burning and moist period burns; 3) habitat degradation by cattail expansion in sedge marshes -- fall burning followed by flooding and buffer from siltation; and 4) lack of nectar sources for adults -- restoration of adjacent or included prairies using flowers known to attract butterflies.

Schlicht, Dennis. Lepidopterist, Center Point, Iowa. Studies of Rare Butterflies in Iowa.

Iowa's prairie and wetland butterflies make up 40% of the total butterfly fauna. Sixty-four percent of the grassland and wetland species are known from less than 20 sites in Iowa. These are potentially negatively impacted by over-simplified management practices. Questions to be addressed are: 1) What is known about these species? and 2) How might management practices and preserve designs better insure their future?

Selby, Gerald, Department of Botany, Iowa State University. Preliminary Results of Population Monitoring Studies of Prairie Skippers on Southwest Minnesota and Northwest Iowa Preserves.

Studies of prairie butterflies were conducted at Prairie Coteau in southwest Minnesota, and several Loess Hills prairies near Sioux City, Iowa. The primary purpose of this year's study was to determine the presence and distribution of butterflies on the sites, and then develop methods for monitoring their populations. Species which were targeted for the monitoring studies included Hesperia dacotae (Dakota Skipper) in Minnesota, and Hesperia ottoe (Ottoe Skipper) in Iowa. Data was also collected for Speyeria idalia (Legal Fritillary), Oarisma powesheik (Powersheik Skipperling), and Atrytone arogos (Arogos Skipper). Future work will include further testing and refining of the population monitoring methods, applications of these methods to evaluate the effects of management, and more detailed ecological studies. Early and late flying species such as Atrytonopsis hianna (Dusted Skipper) and Hesperia leonardus (Leonardus Skipper) will also be considered for future work.

## THE YEAR OF THE BUG

Phil Pellitteri

Last year I was muttering about Wisconsin insects doing all sorts of things that the "books" told us they were not supposed to do. If I were educated in Kansas or California I might understand what went on during 1988, but without that background all I could do was sit down and hold onto my chair. Now that the first hard freeze has hit, it's time to sit back and reflect on who should be named the "Wisconsin Insect of the Year." Unlike other years where one insect came to mind, this year I have to pick a whole order rather than a single species. Aside from the severe drought, I will remember 1988 as the YEAR OF THE TRUE BUG. Yes, Hemiptera fans, it was those lowly beaked devils that stole the show.

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The spring started off with aphids everywhere, but the Coccinelids caught up by the first week of June. There was a bit of Forest Tent Caterpillar (Malacosoma disstria) and cankerworm (various geometrids) activity in the central part of the state. We are expecting to see an outbreak of the Forest Tent Caterpillar in the Madison area next year. As the drought set in, many insects started having a tough time. Most of the Lepidoptera and Coleoptera populations went crashing. Things started to get funny in late June. I started to get complaints of millions of 1-5 mm black "bugs" crawling all over people's homes. They turned out to be nymphs of a seed bug (family Lygaeidae) that is commonly called the false chinch bug (Nysius sp.). This insect is a real generalist and feeds on a wide selection of weeds and cultivated plants. Normally they are found in low numbers in Wisconsin, but thrive in the dry climates of Kansas and Nebraska. As the weeds shriveled because of the lack of moisture, these baby bugs started to migrate. When they pile up to the tune of 3000 per square foot on the sidewalk or on the side of a house, people get upset. The problem was so extensive that one township was going to have a helicopter spray insecticide on the entire community to knock these devils off. Most plants tolerate their feeding very well. When adults clustered by the zillions on some irrigated commercial potato plants and caused extensive wilting on some, spraying was justified. Complaints and insects showed up in early August and late September, indicating at least three generations.

Next it was the box elder bug (Leptocoris trivittatus) plague. I am used to complaints in September, but this year they started on July 1st. The city of Baraboo had them so thick that they were trying to breed in eave troughs that had accumulated a few silver maple seeds. The heavy seed set this spring on box elder and silver maple caused an explosion that still has not settled down. Many people who have never seen these insects are having thousands congregate on the south side of their homes. Given the chance, these bugs try to sneak into buildings and spend the winter rent-free. For some reason, people often call them beetles. As you know, they are harmless, but we did get one report of them being so thick on a grape vine that it started to wilt from the feeding. They are not supposed to do that!

The next wave turned out to be a mix of three or four species of Lygaeids. The adults started showing up on the fourth floor of hospitals or on the sides of a MacDonald's restaurant. I could only guess they were not after Big Macs, but much like the false chinch bugs, were looking for something to eat that had not shriveled up from the drought. My solution for all these bug problems was to let them have it with a soapy water spray. This kills them quickly and washes the house at the same time.

The extreme temperatures did cause a lot of insect mortality. We found bacterial septicemia in some beetles, such as the corn rootworm, that was a result of the stress brought about by 100° plus temperatures. The hot dry weather caused an explosion of spider mite problems. We normally never spray soybeans with insecticides in the Midwest, but Illinois sprayed over four million acres this summer, and we ended up treating over half our soybeans. Spider mites are supposed to be a California problem, not a Wisconsin one!

On a lighter note, my children and I started a family insect collection. We had a good season with five Giant Swallowtails taken at Blue Mounds State Park. My six year-old has more persistence than I ever had. I watched in amazement as he followed a Tiger Swallowtail for 600 yards, and just after he disappeared over the horizon I heard the scream that he was successful. I am thinking of putting him up for rookie of the year honors. My only problem now is that he wants me to mount the 400 imported cabbage worm adults he captured!



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